

The liver like the lungs and other internal organs, is liable to take on active or acute inflammation, and like other inflammations, is generally ushered in with some degree of shivering, and the other symptoms of pyrexia, with pain more or less acute in the right hypochondrium, frequently extending up to the clavicle and shoulder of that side most usually, which is much increased by pressing upon the part. From the great size of this organ, however, and its contiguity of surface with so many other important parts, the seat and kind of pain vary so considerably, as often to occasion some doubt as to the real viscus affected. The pain is very often in such a part of the side as to make it appear like that of pleurisy, and frequently like that too is increased on respiration. This disease is in some instances, also, attended with a cough which is commonly dry but sometimes humid. There is oppression of breathing and a difficulty of lying except on the affected side; the intestines are generally inac-



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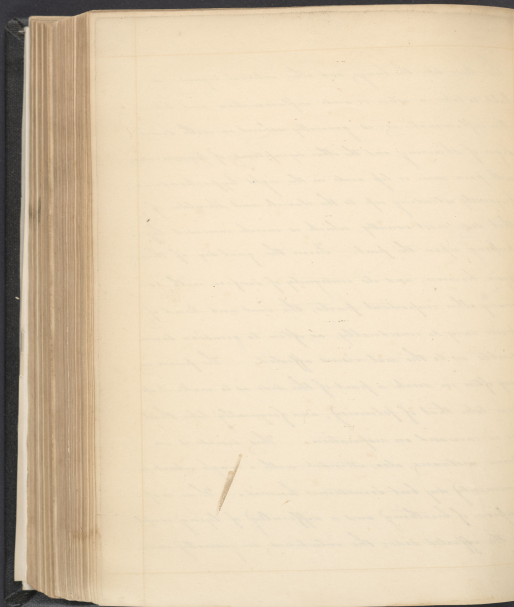
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live, and the stools show a deficiency of biliary secretion, at least of any admixture of it with them; the urine is high coloured and small in quantity, and a heat or scalding is generally complained of in voiding it; there is great thirst; the skin is hot and dry, with a frequent strong, and hard pulse; the tongue is generally covered with a whitish fur; and when the disease has continued for some days, the skin and eyes become tinged of a deep yellow. These are the leading and most prominent symptoms of acute hepatitis.

The exciting causes of hepatitis are not always to be discerned. — The most frequent causes seem to be, external violence from contusions or blows, and especially those which have occasioned a fracture of the cranium; violent exercise, intense summer heats, long continued intermittent and remittent fevers, the application of cold externally or internally, certain passions of the mind, high living, and an intemperate use of insubriating liquors,



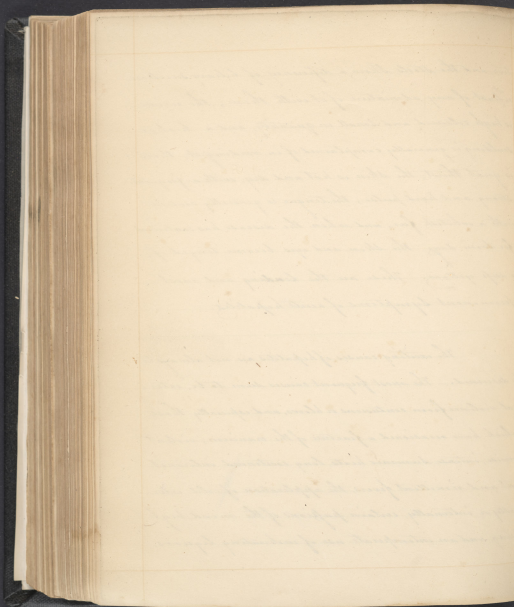




particularly ardent spirits; various solid concretions or collections of liquid matter in the parenchyma of the liver, produced by unknown causes. — In the great number of cases the partial application of cold or humidity, when the body is heated, or over-fatigued by violent or unaccustomed exercise, will be found to be, by far the most frequent exciting causes of this disease.

"It seems probable," says Doctor Cullen, "that acute hepatitis is always an affection of the external membrane of the liver; and that the parenchymatous disease is of the chronic kind." — Nosologists have made a distinction between the symptoms that occur, when the inflammation occupies the convex surface of the liver, and those that are present, when the disease affects the concave surface. The acute disease, therefore, may be seated, either on the convex or concave surface of the liver. — When



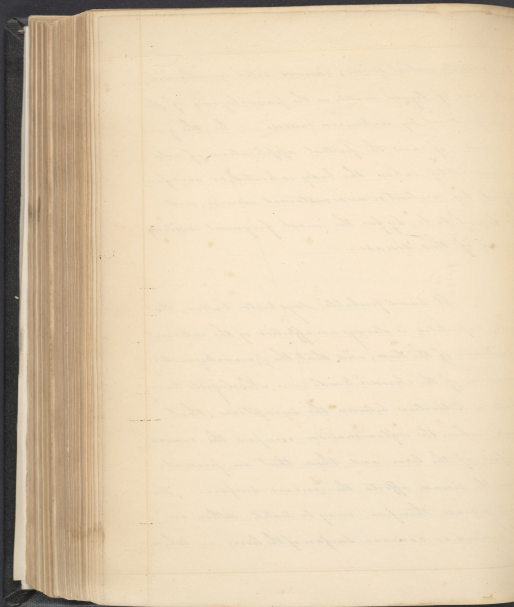




the inflammation occupies the superior, or convex surface of the liver, a more pungent pain, difficult respiration, and cough are produced; and when the inflammation is seated on the inferior, or concave surface, which lies contiguous to the stomach and duodenum, there occurs less pain, but there is more sickness and vomiting.

At the very commencement, the diagnosis of this disease, from inflammation of any contiguous part is not of very material consequence, since the speedy reduction of vascular excitement, by copious venesection, is our main dependence in either disease. But in the choice of cathartic medicines, some discrimination is necessary. — Those who personally examine the effects of purgative medicines on the fecal discharges, will entertain no doubt of the power which particular medicines possess of causing the evacuation of







particular fluids, apparently from their disposition to act on certain sets of digesting or excreting vessels. — On this account it is very desirable to ascertain inflammation of the liver, especially of its glandular structure, and to distinguish it from that of surrounding organs. — This disease then may be distinguished from pneumonia, by the pain in the former extending into the shoulder; by the cough being unaccompanied by expectoration; by the less degree of dyspnoea, and by the pain in inspiration not being so much aggravated in hepatitis, as in pulmonary inflammation; and it may also be remembered, that, whereas the cough is at least coeval with the pain in pneumonia, it generally precedes it in hepatitis. — It is distinguished from gastritis, by the stomach being able to retain whatever liquids and medicines ~~have~~ received into it; and by its not being accompanied, with that



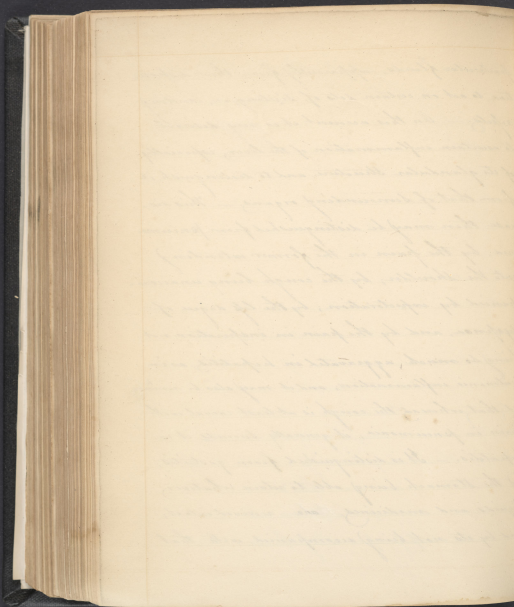
afterwards we were to go to the  
house of the Lord and to sing  
the psalm which is written in the  
book of the prophet Isaiah  
the first chapter the third  
verse and the fourth verse  
the fifth verse the sixth  
verse the seventh verse  
the eighth verse the ninth  
verse the tenth verse the  
eleventh verse the twelfth  
verse the thirteenth verse  
the fourteenth verse the  
fifteenth verse the sixteenth  
verse the seventeenth verse  
the eighteenth verse the  
nineteenth verse the twentieth  
verse the twenty-first verse  
the twenty-second verse the  
twenty-third verse the  
twenty-fourth verse the  
twenty-fifth verse the  
twenty-sixth verse the  
twenty-seventh verse the  
twenty-eighth verse the  
twenty-ninth verse the  
thirtieth verse the thirty-first  
verse the thirty-second verse  
the thirty-third verse the  
thirty-fourth verse the  
thirty-fifth verse the  
thirty-sixth verse the  
thirty-seventh verse the  
thirty-eighth verse the  
thirty-ninth verse the  
fortieth verse the forty-first  
verse the forty-second verse  
the forty-third verse the  
forty-fourth verse the  
forty-fifth verse the  
forty-sixth verse the  
forty-seventh verse the  
forty-eighth verse the  
forty-ninth verse the  
fiftieth verse the fifty-first  
verse the fifty-second verse  
the fifty-third verse the  
fifty-fourth verse the  
fifty-fifth verse the  
fifty-sixth verse the  
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fifty-eighth verse the  
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sixtieth verse the sixty-first  
verse the sixty-second verse  
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strong sense of heat and pain, with which that organ is affected, especially after taking any thing into it, nor is the debility of the system so great in inflammation of the liver, as in that of the stomach. — From Spasm of the biliary ducts, it may be distinguished, by the absence of nausea, by the permanency of the pain, by the frequency of the pulse, and by the preference given to a straight position of body, whereas, in cases of Spasm of the gall ducts, the patient finds the most easy posture, is with his body bent forward on his knees. —

Hepatitis like other inflammations, may terminate by resolution, suppuration, or gangrene. The termination of hepatitis by resolution, is often the consequence of, or is attended with evacuations of different kinds — as hemorrhagy from the nose or hemorrhoidal vessels; by sweating, by a diarrhoea, or by an evacuation of urine depositing a



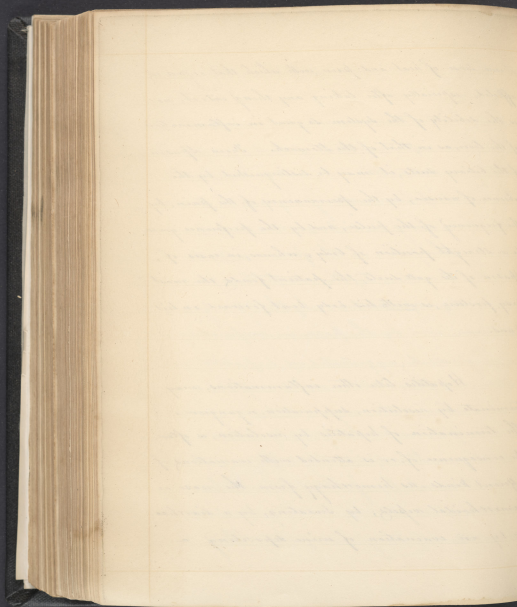




copious sediment. —

The symptoms of Suppuration are not always, however, very obvious — the most striking of them are, a diminution of pain, a sense of pulsation, and of weight in the right hypochondrium, especially when lying on the left side, frequently returning rigours, an accession of fever towards the evening, with flushings of the countenance, a propensity to profuse sweating, and other symptoms of hectic fever. When this disease has ended in suppuration, the abscess may burst into the hepatic ducts, and have the matter carried off by the bowels, or adhesions may form to some of the neighbouring parts, and the discharge of the pus after suppuration, may be various according to the different seats of the abscess. If the adhesion be to the peritonaeum, lining the abdominal cavity, the pus may make its way through the walls of the abdomen, and be dis-







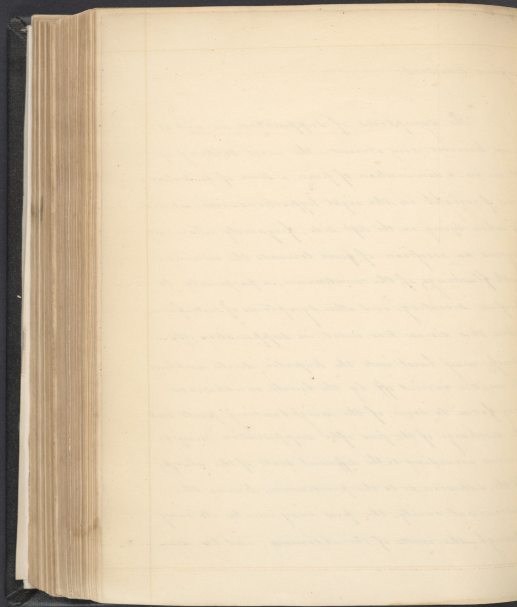
charged externally, or, if the adhesion should have been to the diaphragm, the pus may penetrate through this into the cavity of the thorax, or of the lungs, and through the latter be discharged by the bronchia. Sometimes the abscess forms adhesions with the stomach, or much oftener with the intestines / generally the transverse arch of the colon, or the duodenum, and through this adhesion, the matter is discharged into their cavity, and evacuated either by vomiting or by stool.

The prognosis may be known by the intensity of the symptoms. —

### Treatment.

During the active and inflammatory stage of acute hepatitis, we should adopt general bleeding, proportioning the quantity which is taken away, to the severity of the pain, and the degree of fever that is present, and repeating the







operation very soon again, if the symptoms do not  
quately abate, and the inflammatory action appears  
to subside. — As long as the pulse remains full  
and strong, and the pain in the side pungent,  
blood-letting is the only remedy on which we  
can rely. — After venesection, we should purge  
copiously with the hydrargyri submucosus, quickened  
in its action by jalap, and a strong infusion  
of serena, holding Epsom or Glauber's salts in  
solution.

These steps being taken we may recom-  
mend the application of cups or leeches to the  
region of the liver; and if the symptoms  
do not abate, in consequence of these means,  
a large blister applied over the region of the  
liver, will be likely to prove serviceable.\*

In every case of acute hepatitis, the  
antiphlogistic plan is to be strictly pursued,  
particularly when the febrile symptoms run



\* The blisters should be dressed with mercurial ointment.



high, and endanger a termination in suppuration.

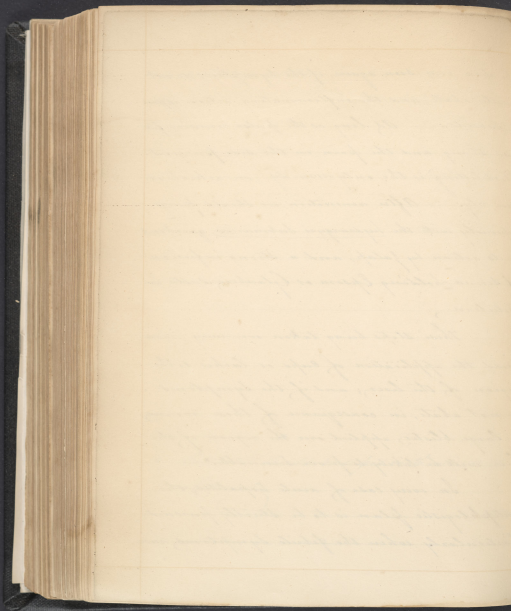
As in other inflammatory affections, the antimonials are exhibited for the purpose of promoting secretion, reducing action, and producing a degree of softness and moisture upon the skin, which may be aided by a free and plentiful use of diluting liquids. —

After the inflammation has been sufficiently reduced by bleeding and active purging, it will be the safest practice, to remove the disease entirely, by a gentle mercurial ptyalism, to be continued for some time.

Thos. G. W. W.

1825







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An Essay  
on  
Acute Hepatitis  
by  
Joshua Nicholas  
of  
Virginia



